

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SSC-01 AID-20 PC-04 OMB-01 IO-14

EB-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15

SAM-01 DRC-01 /174 W

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R 010700Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5235

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0263

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, GB

SUBJ: GOG CABINET CHANGES

REF: LIBREVILLE 0250

1. SUMMARY. LATEST CABINET CHANGE, IN WHICH CONVERSIONS TO ISLAM PROBABLY PLAYED MAJOR ROLE, WITNESSED RISE IN PROMINENCE OF OKUMBA D'OKWATSEGUE, DOWNFALL OF MALEKOU AND REDUCTION IN ROLE OF RAWIRI. END SUMMARY.

2. MOST RECENT CABINET RESHUFFLE REFLECTS CURRENT STANDING OF VARIOUS MINISTERS WHILE AT SAME TIME FURTHER CONCENTRATING POWER IN PRESIDENT AND KEEPING EVERYONE SUFFICIENTLY OFF BALANCE TO INSURE TRACTABILITY.

3. ATTITUDE OF VARIOUS MINISTERS TOWARD ISLAM PROBABLY MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE FACTOR INVOLVED IN CHANGES. OKUMBA WAS APPARENTLY ONE OF FIRST TO CONVERT TO ISLAM AFTER PRESIDENT, WHILE IT IS KNOWN THAT RAWIRI AND MALEKOU RELUCTANT DO SO. DESPITE HIS PUBLIC DISCLAIMERS, SEEMS CLEAR THAT BONGO HAS PUT TREMENDOUS PRESSURE ON HIS MINISTERS (AND OTHER KEY GABONESE) TO BECOME MUSLIM.

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WHILE MANY RECENT CONVERSIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED,

SOME ALREADY KNOWN (LIBREVILLE A-006, FEB 2, 1974).
NUMEROUS PAMPHLETS ON ISLAM (IN FRENCH PRINTED IN LIBYA)
HAVE BEEN NOTED ON CIVIL SERVANTS' DESKS.

4. RAWIRI, WHILE KEEPING HIS RANK IN CABINET, APPEARS
TO HAVE BEEN MOVED TO POSITION LARGELY DEVOID OF SUBSTANCE.
THERE HAD BEEN SIGNS IN RECENT MONTHS THAT BONGO NOT HAPPY
WITH PERFORMANCE HIS FOREIGN MINISTER.

5. MALEKOU, WHO HAD BEEN ONE OF BONGO'S MOST TRUSTED
AND EFFECTIVE MINISTERS HAS FALLEN FROM GRACE. THIS
PROBABLY DUE PARTLY TO HIS RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE (HE HAS
STRONG TIES WITH CATHOLIC CHURCH) AND POSSIBLE ALSO
(ACCORDING TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR) TO FEELING ON PART BONGO
THAT MALEKOU COULD REPRESENT A CHALLENGE TO BONGO'S
AUTHORITY.

6. OKUMBA D'OKWATSEGUE IS CLEARLY RISING STAR WHO APPEARS
TO HAVE CONVINCED BONGO OF HIS ABILITIES AND COMPLETE
LOYALTY.

7. MBOUY-BOUTZIT, NEVER COMPLETELY TRUSTED BY PRESIDENT
BUT TECHNICALLY COMPETENT, MAY OWE HIS SLIGHT RISE IN
RANK TO A CONVERSION.

8. ENTRUSTING PUBLIC WORKS, TRANSPORT AND CIVIL AVIATION
TO NGOUBOU WHO IS OLD WARHORSE OF LITTLE COMPETENCE
PROBABLY SIGNIFIES BONGO'S DESIRE TO KEEP CLOSER
PERSONAL REIN IN THESE FIELDS.

9. THEODORE KWAOU, FORMERLY GABONESE AMBASSADOR TO
KINSHASA AND FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE SURETE NATIONALE,
IS PROBABLY CONSIDERED "SAFE". HIS SECURITY BACKGROUND
MAY MAKE HIM IDEAL, FROM BONGO' STANDPOINT, AS WATCHDOG
OVER THE CIVIL SERVICE.

10. HENRI MINKO IS A NEW FACE WE DO NOT KNOW.
MCKESSON

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